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Near East/South Asia Report

SUDAN:

CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE REVIEWED

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26 March 1986

NEAR EAST/SOUTH ASIA REPORT

SUDAN: CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE REVIEWED

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SUDAN

SUDAN: CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE REVIEWED

Ummah Party States Objectives

London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 28 Jan 86 p 6

[Interview with Wali-al-Din al-Hadi al-Mahdi by Muhammad Ahmad Hisham]

[Text] Following the people's uprising last April, the Ummah Party appeared to be assuming a state of fragmentation into three wings, one under the leadership of al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, another under the leadership of Ahmad al-Mahdi and the third under the leadership of Wali-al-Din al-Hadi al-Mahdi. It seemed as if the dispute was something that would threaten danger for the party's future, but after a few months had passed, the disputes notwithstanding, it appeared as if al-Sadiq al-Mahdi had proceeded to take control of the situation and the organization Ahmad al-Mahdi had established disappeared from the stage, as its leader had, while signs indicated that the other organization, under the leadership of Wali-al-Din, was on its way to reconciliation with al-Sadiq. In this meeting, the latter will present his views on a number of national issues. To the minutes of the conversation:

[Question] Do you believe that the course of events will result in the elections being held on schedule?

[Answer] The answer is yes. The government and the Transitional Military Council have issued a law and appointed the election committee, and the committee has started with the matter of subdividing districts. In general, all arrangements toward carrying out the elections on time are underway. It seems to us that all the parties involved are concerned about this, and I believe that the course of events now will result in the elections being held on schedule.

[Question] What about the south?

[Answer] It is possible to hold elections in most areas of Equatoria, part of the Upper Nile and part of Bahr al-Ghazal. We have assumed that if it is not possible to hold the elections in the whole country at once, the areas where the elections will be suspended or deferred will be areas deferred until the holding of supplementary elections. In this interim, it will be

possible for the current election of parliament to take place, provided that it become a constituent assembly after the membership has been filled.

[Question] Does this mean deferral of the constitutional issues for a while?

[Answer] Yes, the constitutional issues will be deferred until the constituent assembly is filled and parliament resolves the issue of authority on a democratic basis. The issue of the constitution will be left until the constituent assembly is filled.

[Question] Are the bodies involved concerned about this?

[Answer] The answer is yes. It is possible that there might be groups which do not want the elections to be held on schedule for any reason, but in any event they are not announcing these reasons and there is no body which has declared that it does not want the elections to be held. Therefore, even if there is an accusation against any body, that assumes the character of an accusation.

Committed to the Attainment of Balance If We Are Given a Mandate

[Question] What is the Ummah Party's position on the law on elections which was issued?

[Answer] We had believed that this law lacked innovativeness and lacked the infusion of new ideas, and we had believed that a more suitable law would have been one which would produce a new election system based on relative representation because that is more democratic and shows greater respect for collective decisions, and also because in spite of its concern for the proportionate representation of all forces it does not prevent representation of very small forces which fragment and splinter public opinion more than they contribute political and intellectual alternatives. The military council and the council of ministers have rejected this. We have also rejected the other idea, which we had offered, for election on a geographical basis, if election is not accepted on a basis of proportionality giving special representation to the modern forces. In this regard, we have concentrated on professionals, workers, farmers, expatriates and women, since these forces do not get adequate representation from the geographic standpoint. This also has been rejected; the alternative the military council and the council of ministers selected was the graduates' districts.

[Question] Why did the Ummah Party advocate these options?

[Answer] Because the Ummah Party's objective is not just majorities but also, along with the majority, balance. We want the political system to achieve balance, take note of actual conditions and make the political system expressive of the political forces.

In any event, if this amendment is made it will be good. We have committed ourselves to amending these laws if we obtain a majority.

[Question] Does that mean that the Ummah Party will try to amend the law on elections to realize the goals you talked about if it gets a majority?

[Answer] Yes.

[Question] What are the party's preparations for embarking on the elections?

[Answer] The party has started its preparations on a routine basis, but we have found that the size of the organization and the size of the Sudan are great, and therefore the party has decided to call up all forces and the personnel and executive body have been mobilized to cover all the Sudan in the course of a month to raise the level of information, mobilization and organization and prepare for the elections. We believe that the results of this callup have been extremely good and that it will be completed before the end of the elections, that is, before the first election stage, which is the beginning of registration. We believe that in spite of the shortness of time the party has made a great effort in preparing for the elections.

[Question] Has the party held conferences?

[Answer] Yes, the party has held branch conferences and others will be held, although the general conference will be held after registration. On the statement that has been circulated, that some bodies have held conferences, these are not conferences but rather political meetings to which people are invited and there has been no new decision or political discussion. This is something similar to political symposia. The type of conference we are thinking about is a real conference, a conference in which there is real productive participation and decisions are taken. As to the conferences you are talking about, they take place through invitations to the membership and are held to ratify a declared policy; neither the people who call for these conferences nor the people who attend them hold discussions. We believe that these are not conferences; productive forces from the base and on up will come to the conference we are preparing for and carefully studied policies will be presented to it so that it can take a decision and create something new, not to ratify policies, as was the case with some conferences which some bodies held, which were only conferences to bless an approach which had been declared in advance, without elections and without real participation.

[Question] There are allegations that the postponed holding of the Ummah Party conferences was only due to fear of two things, one of which was a struggle over the party leadership, then worry about the positions against the September laws which the party has declared, considering them to be an application of Islamic law, although the party is founded on Islamic belief.

[Answer] That is not true, because the basic composition of the Ummah Party is basically a sound democratic one. As for the issue of Islamic law, the party basically calls for Islamic law, but it rejects the September laws, which it considers a distortion of Islamic law. The base holds this opinion more strongly even than the command in its rejection of Ja'far Numayri's games and allegations. There is no dispute over this matter at the level of the base. Rather, there is enthusiasm that the Ummah Party is against these distorted laws.

[Question] Does this mean that the Ummah Party will take a specific position regarding these laws from within the next parliament?

[Answer] First of all, these laws are not in effect. They are in reality laws that have been frozen.

[Question] Will they be reviewed if your party gets a parliamentary majority?

[Answer] We will tear these laws up and throw them into the wastebasket, indeed, all Numayri's laws. We have alternative Islamic laws and those will be the proper laws -- the laws on the judiciary authority, the penal code, the law on principles of rulings are all acts of manipulation and are all a fraud and distortion of Islamic notions. On this subject, there is an extreme determination at the base of the Ummah Party to reject it in whole and in part.

[Question] What is the party's evaluation of the transitional period and the party's role in the course of it?

[Answer] Of course the most important aspect of the transitional period is that it has preserved the alliance between the armed forces and the parties and unions. This is a great achievement, because this alliance is what brought Ja'far Numayri down and there was a possibility that this alliance would be shattered from within.

Second, the transitional period has managed to establish a sort of exercise of free democracy in the context of the sovereignty of the laws, respect for the independence of the judiciary and the guarantee of general freedoms, and that is something which does not exist in the third world whose circumstances resemble ours.

Third, the transitional period has managed to preserve the nation's security in spite of all the foreign pressures, contain the rebel movement in the south and prevent its extension to the north.

Fourth, the transitional period has provided a political atmosphere which has yielded fruit in terms of thinking about a national plan, national platform and the attempt to unify people's statements on major issues.

The negative aspects of the transitional period are first of all that it has not made adequate haste to hold the constitutional conference to isolate the partisans of the rebellion politically and diplomatically and underline the foundations for dealing with the issues that have been presented from a political standpoint.

Second, the delay in holding the economic conference, to the point where the economic issues over which agreement could have been reached have become an incentive for dispute. It would have been possible to avoid all the strikes had it been possible to hold the economic conference on schedule.

Third, the lack of decisiveness and determination in eliminating May. It is certain that the transitional regime has been permissive with the caretakers in a manner which is not in keeping with the uprising.

Fourth, dealing with the drought. The quantity of foreign food has been abundant, but there have been mistakes and weaknesses in distribution in getting them to their people, and many bodies have been allowed to use them for party purposes, which is cheap exploitation for non-humane objectives. There has also been corruption in use of the circumstances of the drought on the part of some merchants, and they have benefitted from this a great deal. In addition, the issue of the drought itself was not dealt with more patiently, in the sense that the drought condition has caused problems whose effects remain, such as the migration of some people from their areas, which requires that a policy be adopted to bring them back, settle them down, fertilize the pastures and compensate the people who have lost their animal resources, which are everything they have in this life. This subject of the drought has not been studied seriously in spite of all this, and I believe that the transitional period is on the verge of ending with a feeling that the Sudanese have managed to treat the post-May issues and come to the elections in a manner which, in spite of the criticisms regarding it, is reasonable and tolerant.

The Issue of Security

[Question] What in your estimation are the causes of the transitional period's negative features?

[Answer] The disturbances which occurred during the transitional period could have been avoided if the government had held the economic conference at the proper time, so that everyone would understand their condition. However, it was not held until the demands started and a partial response to union demands began, encouraging the others. No party played any part in stopping these disturbances, because they were not childish or acts of excitement but real problems which needed treatment. The people who carried out these disturbances could have adopted a different position had they known and realized that there was a serious orientation toward solving the problems. However, we in the Ummah Party urged the striking union members to suspend the strikes, but in a context where the government would take serious steps to remedy the problems.

On the other hand, there are other considerations. The people who assumed positions realized that their tenure would be brief and viewed their state as one of delegation. Therefore they viewed their role in an extremely limited manner, which weakened their contribution. They did not have a background in government, in terms of practice or experience, and this affected their performance. On top of that there was a conflict between the military council and the civilian council in terms of composition. It took time to be formed, and the parties concerned did not come from a single political orientation so that they might feel a sort of fellowship. These are objective negative features and not anyone's responsibility. They played their role in weakening the transitional period but in spite of this weakness, achievement was made in decisive, important areas.

[Question] In the framework of evaluating the transitional period, it is necessary to talk about the issue of security, its causes and treatment.

[Answer] The problem of security exists in the south and in the border areas. As regards the security problems, the May regime undermined the system of local administration in the various areas without offering a truly alternative system, and this created a vacuum which led to disruptions of security. Regarding the security arrangements in the south and the north in the context of regional autonomy and regional rule, and the command in the north and the south, that was not aware of the necessary coordination, and therefore a disruption resulted in the contact areas then after that the problem of the south arose, and this came about when some people (John Garang and his aides) took up arms. To solve this matter, in our opinion, first, strengthen the armed forces and increase their capability, second, form an armed anti-guerrilla force so that it will be able to resist the techniques of guerrilla war, and third, [strengthen] the tribal guards, enabling them to defend themselves by lawful means.

[Question] Does this apply to the appeal to arm the tribes, or what?

[Answer] No, we advocate disciplined and legal methods by means of the official administration lest they get out of hand, and we want them to be subject to public order, not the tribal order. However, in general, we believe that the Sudanese people are peace-loving and committed to the law.

A New Formula for Cooperation with the Political Forces

[Question] What will be the fate of the National Grouping after the transitional period?

[Answer] We for our part will work to recommend a formula for dealings among the forces which made the transition in April, and this grouping in my opinion will have a role according to what the elected forces in the new parliament decide, in the sense that if we in the Ummah Party are elected we will call for a national orientation and will exercise specific thinking to create a political formula for dealing with all the other political forces in the context of the national interest, with the goal of unifying the national administration. This means that the grouping, in its current form, will end with the end of the transitional period. However, the idea of creating a podium for dealings and national cooperation which is broader than the subjective party one is an idea which in my opinion will prevail, and we will work toward that.

[Question] There is the issue of some people's holding onto arms in the democratic context. What is the way to guarantee the course of democracy?

[Answer] We actually first of all brought up the need to create a strong apparatus for the nation's security, because democracy has a greater need than dictatorship for people who will protect it in the face of rapacious acts against the regime. Secondly, we have recommended a law for the registration of parties. Everything enters into this. On financing, the sources of financing must be disclosed, foreign remittances must be prohibited, there must be a commitment to democracy and violence must be prevented. I believe that it was a negative feature of the transitional period that there was a failure to issue a law of this kind. Therefore we are now in the face

of major disturbances and it is necessary to abrogate the defunct law on state security, put another law into effect, eliminate the old security agencies and establish a security system through a democratic law. Thirdly, a basic law should be issued for the registration of parties and establishment of a political court for the expression of grievances and party complaints.

[Question] This conversation has not addressed itself to the army and the danger of military coups. How in your estimation can this sort of danger be faced?

[Answer] Of course coups are a quick way to power, but I believe that the Sudan is an unsuitable environment for military rule. There are many factors which prevent military people from benefitting from coups, and this is what we have taken for granted, that there is thinking of this sort. In the absence of deterrent systems, there are basic facts. First of all, the Sudanese people have political awareness and are prepared to continue the struggle and resist for a long time without faltering. The Sudanese political schools continued to raise the banner of resistance in spite of the thoughtlessness and manipulation Ja'far Numayri exercised. This means that there are roots for the rejection of dictatorship, and the Sudanese union movement has the same type of firmness, ability and power to resist. The third thing is that as long as there are problems such as that of the south, the army has other tasks and it becomes very difficult to seize power. The fourth thing is with the diversification of the Sudan's conditions and circumstances, there is no way to remedy problems if there is no sort of public approval. It is true that there might be coups, but in my opinion there are circumstances in the Sudanese environment which prevent such coups from taking place.

We Will Work toward an Islamic Economy

[Question] What is the nature of the Sudanese economy the Ummah party is trying to pursue?

[Answer] The Islamic economic system is the one which can develop natural resources in the society to meet the people's natural and material needs in accordance with the principles of the teachings of Islam, and we believe that such an economy will be closely linked with ideas which did not exist in the past, such as the notion of planned development led by the public sector, with the cooperative and private sectors taking part in it, so that development will be rapid and equitable in the distribution of its yield. These are the general features. We believe that our economy has set out on this course. How can the economy be Islamic and modern? That requires much individual thinking which is not present now. All the talk about current practices, which are called Islamic, in the economic area, in our opinion is deficient, partial and inadequate by the standards of Islam itself, and we need the experience to be more comprehensive. This requires individual theorizing; we have many recommendations in this regard and they must be developed on a collective basis to form a basis for the proposed Islamic economic system. Our economy itself suffers from many things which the defunct regime brought about, in the form of the decline in production, extravagance in spending, deteriorated management, financial corruption, debts, and the

distortion which occurred in the wage and salary structure. We must remedy all these things, which prompts us to the call to hold a national economic conference. The party has prepared working papers for this conference, we believe it will be in our ability to rescue this Sudanese economy and we hope that this economic conference will be held before the elections are held. However, in any event we will hold the general party conference and will make decisions regarding these policies which will be presented to the people in general in the elections.

[Question] If the elections are not held, what will be your vision of the government system?

[Answer] if there is a convincing political security reason for not holding the elections on schedule, this means ending the transitional period on its specified date and creating a new charter which will go into effect for a year after the new charter. A sovereignty council will head the government, there will be a council of ministers representing the political and group forces and a small consultative council for enlarged consultation, and an amendment will be made to the constitution to include these new channels and set out the organization of the transitional period on the new basis.

[Question] Has agreement been reached on any tentative alliances?

[Answer] No decision has been made on coordinating with any party at the present time. Coordination or alliance could take place at the right time. There are things the interests of the country require, and we will determine all this at the general conference. If none of this is done, we will commit ourselves to a national platform. The preservation of democracy requires commitment to the national platform.

Features of a Democratic System for the Sudan

[Question] What is your view of the future of the government system?

[Answer] If we review the conditions that will pave the way for democracy, we will find that those that exist in the Sudan are:

First, social diversification and mediating bodies which put the government in the hands of the society, not vice versa.

Second, the British period created the institutions of a strong modern state in spite of the damage they were subjected to recently.

Third, political development in the Sudan has proceeded apace in a peaceful, tolerant form.

Fourth, the economic element is oriented in the direction of democratic development.

Fifth, the cultural heritage, based on the Islamic and tribal reality, must pass on through a cultural revolution so that it may draw its strength from the principles of Islam, not from the practice of Moslems.

[Question] Are there influential factors pointing toward democratic development in the Sudan?

[Answer] First, the manner in which the April revolution occurred created a climate of warm feelings in civilian-military relations at a single stroke, and this has had the effect of helping peaceful political development.

Second, there are no essential economic problems or oppressive foreign interests in the Sudan; therefore, there is no basic ideological struggle over development and the plan for distributing the output from it.

[Question] What is the optimum democratic system for the Sudan, in your estimation?

[Answer] Before coming up with a description of a democratic system, there are two important things which will have the greatest effect on the success or grievous failure of democracy in the Sudan. These are:

First, resolving the issue of identity, since the Sudan is Islamic, Arab and African. The Islamic orientation one is talking about is based on the international political, economic and social principles of Islam and deals with the facts of the modern age, the identities of the other minorities and the international family. Arab affiliation must be understood in terms of language and culture; this gives Arabhood an acquired meaning, not an inherited one, a dynamic one, not a frozen one, and one that coexists with other cultures. African affiliation, if proceeding from notions of genetics or color, opens the door for the destruction of the Sudanese identity. However, if we understand Africa as it must be understood, in a geographic and historic sense, we will be able to avoid polarization of genetics and color.

[Question] What are the features of the proposed system?

[Answer] This democratic system that is selected will be founded on the principle of the separation of powers and will realize the independence of the judiciary. The legislative authority will be founded on free elections, the competition will be among party lists in the districts and the districts will have to give specific weight to the modern professional, labor and other social forces and in addition to geographic districts provide class districts to represent the modern social forces in a manner which reflects the actual state of their social influence.

In the context of the legislative power, it will stipulate that the Koran and the sayings and doings of the prophet are the main source of legislation in the country.

[Question] How will it be possible to accommodate the south in this framework in constitutional terms?

[Answer] The establishment of a system of regions on the basis of decentralization is dictated by the human and geographic nature of the Sudan and is something over which the Sudanese political movement in the sixties reached consensus. The recognition that the south has a special status is something

that has been assumed, and it led to the Addis Ababa agreement in 1972, which is basically founded on the resolutions of the conference of Sudanese parties in 1967. What is required now is that the Sudanese constitutional regime establish regional autonomy in the south while avoiding the negative features of the experiment and guarantee the exercise of democracy.

[Question] How will the executive authority be unified in the context of this system?

[Answer] The executive authority will be in the hands of an individual in accordance with a direct contested election by the people, this procedure will guarantee decisiveness in the adoption of executive decisions and the executive authority's commitment to the national platform will have to be observed in order to avoid polarization.

[Question] What will be the status of the armed forces in this sort of system?

[Answer] It is certain that the armed forces in our circumstances have political weight; if there is no explicitly stated political voice for this weight, it will express itself by non-legal means. Therefore, the political system must include a legitimate channel for military participation, provided that in this equation it form a reconciliation between participation in national policies and the discipline which is the essence of military power and the guarantee of its coherence.

African Conference Party Views

London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 28 Jan 86 p 6

[Interview with Dr Lam Akol of the Sudanese African Conference]

[Text] Following the people's uprising, the people of the south hastened to organize their party entities in a framework of constitutional legitimacy and rejection by many southern politicians of what they described as opportunistic and schismatic tendencies in the southern Sudan. One of the most prominent of these political parties is the party of the Sudanese African Conference.

In the course of a series of meetings with the leaders of Sudanese parties, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT met with Dr Lam Akol, a leader of the Sudanese African Conference, and he spoke about his organization and the coming parliamentary elections.

[Question] The Sudanese are putting great reliance on the holding of elections, since they are the salvation of the country from the numerous problems. What is your opinion?

[Answer] I agree with you that elections are the sole democratic means for choosing a constituent assembly, and it is an important matter because the transitional situation, whatever it might be, is not a stable one. We have considered it appropriate to combine the forces of the rural areas in their various entities in a single crucible and enter into elections within the common movement of the forces of the rural areas.

[Question] What are your political ideological premises and your future views?

[Answer] Out of our esteem for the historic event embodied in the April uprising; the observation on our part of the obvious neglect of the southern point of view in the wake of the revolution; an awareness on our part of the importance of our unity and the effective, decisive participation of the African element in the formation of the Sudanese state; the realization on our part that the south of the Sudan and other parts of the country have been deprived of any real development; the rejection on our part of the opportunistic and schismatic tendencies in the south; and a realization on our part of our historic responsibility, we present our positions to the Sudanese people regarding the issues related to the basic rights of man, foreign policy, economic plans, cultural identity, national sovereignty and the exercise of power, in addition to political and military powers during and after the transitional period.

[Question] What are your recommendations for solving the problem of the south so that stability can prevail in all the areas of the Sudan?

[Answer] We consider that the transitional government must get in direct contact with the People's Movement for the Liberation of the Sudan and the People's Army for the Liberation of the Sudan in order to arrive at a permanent peaceful solution. The transitional period also must be adequate for holding negotiations toward a permanent peaceful solution to the national question and a review of the definition of the Sudan in terms of its African orientation, the rebuilding of the structure of the central authority and the effective participation of the south in all the institutions of central power.

[Question] The economic problem is considered the central problem the defunct regime has bequeathed. How do you view the solution?

[Answer] I agree with you totally that the economic problems are among the heavy legacies the defunct regime has bequeathed us. Therefore, we consider it necessary to hasten to set out new economic plans which will rescue us from the bottomless abyss it has left us in, through a review of all the agreements concluded with all the companies which plundered the national wealth, a review of the Nile water agreement, a freeze on work on the Jonglei Canal project and a review of cooperation and agreements with the companies and organizations which have destroyed the domestic economy, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We also consider it necessary to review the economic authorities and the issue of income-sharing with respect to natural resources among the centers and regions in which these resources are present and to review production relations in agricultural projects among the farmers, the boards, the government and so forth. Since the Sudan is an agricultural country, we consider it necessary to reform and diversify agricultural policy in the Sudan and set aside special urgent financial sections for the sake of developing the most backward areas in the Sudan.

[Question] What are your organization's tendencies as regards foreign policy in the future?

[Answer] We consider commitment to positive neutrality and good neighborliness, affirmation of the Sudan's affiliation with the nonaligned bloc, elimination of the integration agreement and joint defense agreement between the Sudan and Egypt, withdrawal from the alliance of the Red Sea countries, strengthening of relations with peaceloving countries, elimination of the foreign military bases in the Sudan and exposure and expulsion of all foreign state security advisors to be necessary.

An effort must be made to prevent all destructive activities which are organized within the country against other countries and give strong support to liberation movements in Africa and the world.

[Question] What is your assessment of the transitional government?

[Answer] In my own opinion, there are a number of circumstances and factors which have caused the transitional government to fail grievously in realizing some of its duties in an effective manner. We have already set out the duties of the transitional government according to our view, including the permanent solution to the endemic problem of the ethnic groups in the country, the revival of the economy, the extirpation of the May regime, the elimination of corruption wherever it exists, the elimination of the state security law and other duties which our party considered appropriate. However, most unfortunately, the transitional government has failed badly in many of these duties.

[Question] If the elections are not held for any reason, do you consider it appropriate to extend the transitional period or establish a national government?

[Answer] We in firm alliance with the forces of the rural areas stress the need to put an end to the transitional period at its scheduled time, provided that elections be held to form the constituent assembly. However, we recommend that a sovereignty council and a national government be formed which will be by unanimity of all the political and national forces, and we consider that this government must be composed of all the parties, which means removing the armed forces from political action and dissolving the transitional military council.

[Question] Then what about the elections?

[Answer] As I mentioned above, elections are needed for choosing a government, but they must be held after a sort of stability comes about in the Sudan, and the close alliance among the forces of the rural areas considers that elections must be held after the Sudan enjoys security and stability, its economy is revived and solutions are found to all its economic and security problems. After all this happens, we will be able to hold free elections in an atmosphere of security and stability.

In general, we are in favor of democracy and will continue to defend it with all the strength we possess.

Democratic People's Party Position

London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 22 Jan 86 p 7

[Interview with Muhammad Ziyadah of the Democratic People's Party]

[Text] The Democratic People's Party was reconstituted on 15 September 1985, that is, more than 5 months after the April revolution took place. While that is an extension of the People's Democratic Party which was formed in 1967, it is still in its infancy and has had a life of no greater than 3 months, although the period which followed its reconstitution was all devoted to the establishment of its political agencies, and not all its leadership agencies or branch committees have yet been completely formed.

Mr Muhammad Ziyadah, the lawyer and secretary general of the Democratic People's Party, considers that the portion of the transitional period which has elapsed has been filled with great events, such as the creation of the constitution of the transitional period, the law on elections, the investigation of the May custodians, the handing over of some of them to trial, the elimination of many of the effects of May and the start of studies to rectify the course of the Sudanese economy and improve the Sudan's relations with many countries adjacent to us.

The party considers that the greatest achievement in this period is the democratic climate the Sudanese people are experiencing now, after the repression and terror which had constantly engulfed them over the past 16 years, in spite of the obstacles which we have inherited from the May era, such as the problem of the drought, desert encroachment, financial damage, rebellion in the south, which has exploited the democratic climate to expand the scope of its military operations, and the attempts at racist coups and factional demands. In addition, the negative manifestations of the exercise of democracy have been not so much due to the parties' absence from the arena of the issues of the period as a natural highlighting of the tremendous magnitude of problems the transitional government inherited from the May regime. The parties were still in the process of emerging and working in a race with time to prepare to enter the elections scheduled for next April. The main cause of the phenomena of negativism in the democratic experiment in this short period of time, the continued everyday suffering of the people and the diverse forms of instability is the nature of the stage itself, not the absence of parties from the stage. The role of the parties will begin after their formation is completed and their bases are built, and after the transitional period has ended.

Herewith is the text of the conversation held with Mr Ziyadah the lawyer:

[Question] What is the background to the unionists' struggle?

[Answer] There are no disputes in the Democratic People's Party because the political vision confronting the party and its members is clear and there is no ambiguity or obscurity in it. We believe and act on behalf of federation with Egypt and our orientations are Arab and Islamic. The disputes between the unionists and us are due to the clarity of political vision we possess and the lack of such clarity on their part, as we see it, in addition to the symbols which make up the political leadership of the Democratic People's

Party and the unionists. In general, we in the Democratic People's Party have continued to function with all the means for unifying all the unionists around the principle of federation with Egypt and the placing of genuine federal symbols in positions of leadership through the people, and we constantly reach out to every serious initiative in this regard.

Elections in the North and South

[Question] Do you believe that the course of events will lead to elections?

[Answer] Yes, I believe that the course of events will indeed lead us to the holding of elections on schedule, but I consider that there are practical difficulties that have no relation to the course of events which could prevent that, leaving out elements of surprise.

[Question] Is everyone anxious for them to be held on the specified date?

[Answer] Yes, I believe that the bodies concerned (the government and the parties) are anxious that they be held on time.

[Question] What is your position on the current law on elections?

[Answer] The law on elections has emerged to fulfill the requirements of the period and the nature of the situation. The possibility that the elections will not be held in specific areas of the south for security reasons is acceptable to us but what we do not accept is the holding of elections in the north and their deferral in all the south. The Democratic People's Party boycotted the elections in 1965 because the existing government at that time decided that they should be held in the north and not the south. I do not believe that there will be any harmful effects on the future of the system in the country if the coming government is concerned to hold elections immediately in any part of the south where it becomes possible to hold them.

[Question] Does the Democratic People's Party hold the same level of conviction?

[Answer] Yes, the Democratic People's Party is concerned about that, so that it will be possible to end the current transition period and get into another stage in which the governing authorities will have greater effectiveness than the authorities present now.

[Question] What are the party's preparations for the elections?

[Answer] We are preparing to enter the elections. We have started to form our branch committees and organize our mass bases, and delegations from the general center of the party in Omdurman will soon go about the regions when the process of registering voters starts.

The Pioneering Role of the Private Sector

[Question] The economic pattern the party follows is not known.

[Answer] We in the Democratic People's Party consider that the private sector must play its pioneering role in the area of the economy and that domestic capitalism has the duty of building up the Sudanese economy. The role of the government (or what is called the public sector) must not exceed the government's financial resources and its activity must not go beyond the scope of the projects the private sector is incapable of carrying out and strategic projects which are closely tied to the people's life. We also consider that the cooperative sector must get encouragement, guidance and regulation from the government in order to play its role in the Sudanese rural areas. For the government to assume the ownership and management of restaurants and the sale of cloth, soft drinks and other consumer goods is not acceptable to us. We in the Democratic People's Party do not restrict ourselves to a specific economic theory -- rather, we deal with our economic problems on the basis of reality, not from prior intellectual premises, and we accept all solutions which are compatible with the Sudanese people's social composition, the nature of their economic problems and the environment and circumstances these problems have highlighted.

[Question] How does the party view production relations in the Sudan?

[Answer] In regard to production relations, we reject the savaging of workers' rights by employers, and at the same time we reject the transgression by the workers' union boards and labor federations of the limits which the laws regulating production relations have drawn up; we call for balanced production relations guaranteeing the workers their rights and the employers their rights. As for the labor statutes and conditions of service, these must be founded on the appropriate wage for each job and must provide the workers and employers with every guarantee that will lead to an increase which is not subject to the whim of the employers or workers.

[Question] What foreign support is required?

[Answer] A foreign role in investment is desirable and needed, but this investment must be in areas of productive projects such as agriculture and the development of livestock growing. In the area of services, the foreign role must be in the narrowest limits and according to necessity. A foreign role is extremely desirable in the area of technology and heavy industries.

[Question] Where is the position of expatriates regarding support for the domestic economy?

[Answer] Expatriates constitute a great economic force as far as the Sudan goes in terms of the influence of their remittances on the balance of payments by providing foreign currency to nourish the public treasury. They must be encouraged to make remittances, the necessary guarantees must be provided for them, they must be given more benefits, and the course of expatriate living, remittances and investment must be regulated so that it will be possible to make maximum use of the expatriates in building the Sudanese economy.

Scheduling Foreign Debts

[Question] Foreign debts represent a big burden; what is the remedy?

[Answer] Foreign debts are like anthrax as far as the Sudan is concerned. They drain off all our foreign currency revenues in payment of their principle, interest and other services and are the cause of all the problems we are suffering from in our daily life. Scheduling these debts will increase the people's burdens by increasing the interest on them. It is necessary to pay off these debts and get rid of them as soon as possible. We recommend the establishment of a fund to be called the national debt fund which will be financed by the people.

[Question] Have the effects of the drought and desert encroachment actually been controlled?

[Answer] The causes of the drought and desert encroachment can be ascribed to natural factors, but the May regime's negligence in alleviating the effects of these phenomena, limiting the expansion of their scope and dealing with some of them have made these natural phenomena a national catastrophe, indeed an international catastrophe, and have put fighting these phenomena beyond our domestic powers. We are in need of international aid to deal with the causes of these phenomena, not to deal with their results and effects as is the case now.

[Question] What is the future of the National Grouping?

[Answer] The National Grouping will not have any political role after the transitional period, because its life is contingent on this period and the nature of its formation makes it inevitable that it disappear after the establishment of the constituent assembly on 16 April 1986.

[Question] How does the party view union activity?

[Answer] Unions consist of vocational organizations based on the law and their existence is a necessity to protect the interests of the people who have rallied together beneath their banners. These unions have played national roles which cannot be denied. The most recent such role was the one it played in the April revolution.

[Question] What are the means for guaranteeing democracy?

[Answer] Guaranteeing the course of democracy after the transitional period will depend to a large extent on the party alliance and seriousness of the incoming authorities in standing up to economic problems, providing a necessary amount of the needs of the man in the street in the form of consumer goods at acceptable prices, alleviating his sufferings and, on top of all this, convincing the military forces that democratic civilian rule is the only option which must be adhered to.

[Question] What are the People's Democratic Party's most important points of concentration in foreign policy?

[Answer] Nonalignment and good neighborliness are among the basic points of concentration on which the Sudan's foreign policy must be founded, by which the government will be able to devote itself full time to remedying all the

country's problems. Wars and conflicts with our neighbors will bring only ruin upon us. Alignment with either of the two great powers can be resolved by international balance in the Arab and African frameworks, and its effects will be reflected on our country.

Southern Political Alignments Reviewed

London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 17 Jan 86 p 6

[Text] Not a day passes in the Sudan that does not witness the announcement of the establishment of a new political party in the north of the country. The known number of these parties is now greater than 20, but no one knows the real number, because official party registration has not yet started.

The south of the Sudan has also kept its share and participated in the process of party proliferation in the Sudan. The people of the south have formed five main parties. The first of these was the Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan of April 1985, under the leadership of Samuel Aru Bol, the current deputy prime minister and minister of irrigation. This was followed in a short time by the Sudanese African Conference in April 1985, under the leadership of Dr Kunijwok Ayukir, lecturer in the political science department at Khartoum University. The Sudanese African National Union (S-NU) was re-established under the leadership of Andrew Wieu in June 1985, then the African Sudanese People's Conference was established under the chairmanship of Maurice Luwiya. In August 1985, another new party was established by the name of the People's National Party under the leadership of Eliaba Surur.

One can say that these parties are similar from many standpoints, and this creates a direct conflict between them and the northern parties. However, on the other hand, these parties, unlike the National Movement for the Liberation of the Sudan which Col John Garang leads, reject violence as a means for solving the country's numerous economic, social and political problems.

Almost all these parties view what is known as the problem of the south of the Sudan as in reality a process of bringing policies of racial, religious and cultural discrimination to the fore as well as the product of the unbalanced developmental policy the successive national governments in the north have followed and consecrated.

These parties present themselves as national instruments concerned with the lack of balance in development in the country and warn that the African nature of the Sudan has not seriously been taken into account by the authorities in Khartoum.

The Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan, as its name indicates, is the southerners' only party, but in reality it has not attracted all the parties of the south under its umbrella except for the Front of the South, which has totally melted into the grouping. This is the old political party which no longer holds its name. It was under the leadership of Clement Mboro.

The Constitutional Conference

There are peripheral disputes among the five parties of the south vis-a-vis the appeal to hold a national conference to discuss the country's problems. The Sudanese African Conference considers that there are conditions which must be met. The Progressive People's Party and the African Sudanese People's Conference want to hold a southern regional conference or a number of mini-conferences at the outset to enable the people of the south effectively to take part in the main conference. The African Sudanese People's Conference has also stipulated the condition of the release of all the southern political prisoners (Numayri's aides) in order to give them an opportunity to take part in the conference. The public prosecutor, Mr 'Umar 'Abd-al-'Ati, actually released them in November 1985.

It is believed that the Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan is the only party which has seemed to be ready to attend the conference without preconditions.

The Subdivision of the South

The main issue which is still the object of strong dispute among these five parties is that of the subdivision of the south. While we find that the Progressive People's Party and the African Sudanese People's Conference are agreed in their opposition to the reunification of the southern Sudan and their opposition to the reconstitution of the higher transitional executive council of the south of the Sudan, we observe that the Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan and the Sudanese African Conference are united in their support of the reunification of the south, and it is believed that the SANU party takes an intermediate position; whereas it has declared its opposition to the reconstitution of the higher executive council, we find it calling for the adoption by the southerners of a unified position on matters of major importance.

The dispute over the unification of the south is not the only one. Although the Progressive People's Party and the African Sudanese People's Conference are two parties established by the people of Equatoria and there is little they differ over politically, they are not on affectionate terms, because the African Sudanese People's Conference had a strong link to the former government of the region of Equatoria headed by Joseph James Tombura while the Progressive People's Party has been connected to support for the current government of Equatoria headed by Maj Gen Peter Scrilio; therefore Joseph Tombura's supporters saw fit to join the African Sudanese People's Conference and his opponents went to the Progressive People's Party.

The disputes between the two parties of Equatoria deepened recently because of some changes in higher positions in the civil service in Equatoria. The African Sudanese People's Conference considered these unnecessary, and at the same time accused the Progressive People's Party of standing behind them. The African Sudanese People's Conference declared that if it came to power it would not recognize these changes, and in this manner froze discussions one of whose effects was to unify the two parties. However, the Progressive People's Party denied its connection with the creation of these

changes in administrative positions. In addition to that, the people's union alliance in Equatoria appeared as a supporter of the People's Progressive Party. In the face of this position, the African Sudanese People's Conference demanded the re-election of this labor federation, but the Progressive People's Party denied that the union federation was one of its subsidiaries.

The relationship between the Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan and the Sudanese African Conference is not one of milk and honey. The conference calls the Political Grouping "the government party" in mocking tones and accuses it of sacrificing everything for the sake of cabinet seats; it is well known that the leader of the grouping, Mr Samuel Aru, now occupies the position of deputy prime minister and minister of irrigation and the deputy leader of the grouping, Peter Gatkuoth, assumes the position of minister of transport and communications in the current transitional government in Khartoum. The conference claims that the grouping attained just three cabinet seats in the transitional government formed after the people's uprising last April, while the conference had asked for five seats for southerners besides the service ministries. The grouping for its part accuses the conference of presenting a list of candidates, including a third-year university student, in secret at a time while it was making a loud noise about the ministerial portfolios, and the conference has denied this charge.

With the Parties of the North

The southern parties' relationship with the parties in the north is also marred by a lack of clarity. All signs place the Progressive People's Party and the African Sudanese People's Conference in a relationship of friendship and affection with the National Islamic Front because of the Islamic Front's support of the cause of the subdivision of the south. The SANU party has historically been considered to have a good relationship with the Ummah Party, and it appears that the relationship still assumes this form. It is no secret, either, that the Sudanese African Conference is in agreement with the Sudanese Communist Party on many issues.

The South for Whom?

As the date for the holding of the general elections approaches, these southern parties have started to prepare lists of their candidates for 28 geographic districts and three graduates' districts in the Bahr al-Ghazal region, 20 geographic districts and two graduates' districts in the Equatoria region and 20 geographic districts and two graduates' districts in the Upper Nile.

It is not easy to confirm how many seats each of these parties will win, but there is evidence that the Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan has great opportunities in the Bahr al-Ghazal region, since most of the inhabitants of Bahr al-Ghazal support the reunification of the south, and it is likely that the Political Grouping will sweep the Lake and East Bahr al-Ghazal Governorates because of its opposition to the subdivision of the south. However, it is not likely that the grouping will meet with success in the Governorate of West Bahr al-Ghazal, and it is expected that this governorate will go over to the people's committee for the development of Bahr

al-Ghazal headed by 'Ali Tammim Fartak (a former minister and former governor). The committee has started to back its efforts up with the African Sudanese People's Conference and the proponents of the subdivision in the south for the sake of establishing a league for political forces in the southern regions. The nucleus of this grouping is considered to be seven groupings in the federations that are working to keep the three regions in the south of the Sudan. The SANU party has chances to win in the Upper Nile, however, and in addition the Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan is capable of winning some seats in Jonglei Governorate.

An Equatoria Campaign

In Equatoria, the campaign will be between the People's Progressive Party and the African Sudanese People's Conference. It is likely that the African Sudanese People's Conference will sweep West Equatoria, the home of Joseph James Tombura, while subdivision will win out in East Equatoria, and it is likely that the Juba area will be in the favor of the Progressive People's Party and Tawrit and Yay in the favor of the African Sudanese People's Conference. The two parties will compete over the Kabuita region but it is not likely that the Sudanese African Conference headed by Dr Kuniwok Ayukir, the lecturer at Khartoum University, will win any seats since the party is not known to have any support outside Khartoum, nor is it likely that any of the northern parties will win seats in the south. Thus it appears most likely that the Political Grouping of the South of the Sudan will win most of the seats. However, if one takes into consideration the opponents and supporters of subdivision, its supporters will be a majority, so, in the absence of any foreign factors and reference to the People's Movement for the Liberation of the Sudan, the proponents of subdivision will win these seats, and thus it is likely that the three regions will remain as they are, separate. The importance of the People's Movement for the Liberation of the Sudan here lies in its opposition to the subdivision of the south of the Sudan. Thus it is likely that it will demand a return to a unified region in any negotiations in which it is a party, and, perhaps because it is an armed movement, it might receive a full hearing from the authorities.

Until the activities of the People's Army for the Liberation of the Sudan end, it is doubtful that general elections will be held in many areas of the south of the Sudan. Even if the People's Movement decides to enter the elections, the foregoing analysis will not be much affected; the movement does not have the ability to win more than a handful of seats, because the purposes of the movement and the army, as related to the liberation of the whole Sudan and the struggle for all the backward regions in their entirety, are not understood by the people of the south, and are not acceptable to most of them. The people of the south for the most part are not totally sympathetic with the Nubians, for example, because these people in their estimation are the ones who fought the people of the south by proxy for the central government during the past civil war, and the inhabitants of the other backward regions such as al-Yaja and others are not totally known to most of the people of the south.

SANU Expresses Views

London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 17 Jan 86 p 6

[Interview with Dr Andrew Wieu, chairman of SANU]

[Text] The Sudanese African National Union Party (SANU) was established in exile in 1961 during 'Abbud's military regime. This party primarily had the goal of supporting the cause of the south of the Sudan and demanding the establishment of a federal system in the Sudan. When 'Abbud's government fell in October 1964 and the appeal was made for a round table to discuss the problem of the south, William Deng, a founder of the SANU party, returned to the Sudan with some of his aides. The party started to engage in its political activity inside the Sudan in April 1965, directly after the round table conference, to continue negotiations on a solution to the problem of the south of the Sudan with the committee of 12 which the round table conference had formed. The SANU party offered the committee of 12 a draft constitution for the federal system.

After discussions lasting more than a year, the SANU party perceived fear on the part of northern politicians over the draft federal system for the south of the Sudan; they considered it a step toward the secession of the south from the north. The party recommended changing the name of the draft to the draft for the regional autonomy for the south, and all the political parties agreed to this amendment as a first step to persuade the parties who were worried about the federal system after it went into effect. When the May regime applied the recommendations of the committee of 12 through the Addis Ababa agreement, the former president pointed out that it had not produced anything new but that it had carried out what the Sudanese parties had agreed to with some modification.

The party has an extensive history and organized political activity, and it is one of the political parties of the south which has great political weight and effective influence on the course of Sudanese politics. It was necessary that meet to converse with the chairman of this party concerning the issue of the elections and for these reasons and motives Dr Andrew Wieu. Riak, chairman of the SANU party, met with us to talk to us about the party and the elections.

The SANU Party and the Elections

[Question] What have been your party's preparations for entering the coming elections?

[Answer] Let me begin with a historic glance at the party's experiences with parliamentary elections in the Sudan. The SANU party engaged in the supplementary elections to the constituent assembly in 1967 and the party won 10 seats in parliament. It was the party which won the third greatest number of votes in the constituent assembly. It also entered the 1968 elections and brought 15 deputies into parliament. It ranked fourth in terms of votes. After the May 1969 coup and the declaration of the dissolution of the constituent assembly and all political parties, including the SANU party, the party nonetheless continued its political activity in an undeclared form.

There is no dispute over elections as a democratic principle. The party approves the holding of elections in all areas of the Sudan at a single time, and the party also considers it necessary to hold the coming elections after the holding of the reconciliation conference, because the coming constituent assembly's basic activity will be a situation satisfactory to all political tendencies. We consider that the task of the provisional military council and the transitional government is to solve the problem of the war going on in the south as they promised after the uprising.

In view of the delapidated economic situation in the country, it is not logical to bring deputies from remote areas and spend money on them before we can guarantee them basic work and prepare the proper political climate for them to carry out the draft constitution. Otherwise, they will become a heavy burden on the public treasury.

The Federal System

[Question] What is the political program with which you will enter the coming elections?

[Answer] The party's election program has the goal of establishing a federal system in the Sudan to support regional government. The party considers that application of the federal system in the Sudan is the most suitable political approach because the Sudan is a vast country and it cannot be governed from the center. There are examples where the federal system has succeeded in countries with vast areas like the Sudan, such as the United States, the Soviet Union, India and so forth. The Sudan is a country with a number of cultures and its cultural identity consists of the Arab element and the African element in addition to the cultures of tribal groups which insist on preserving their identity, as is the situation in Nigeria. The Sudan has a historic background in the experience of decentralization which started with local government and ended with the establishment of a system of regional autonomy in the south. No problems occurred in any of these experiences except for a lack of commitment to what they had promised on the part of the leaders who administered the country. The extension of regional autonomy to a federal system in the Sudan cannot pose any difficulties in the Sudan, while the establishment of a federal system will encourage local development initiatives, although the local entities will rely on themselves to develop their local capabilities.

Evaluation of the Transitional Period

[Question] What is your evaluation of the transitional period?

[Answer] When the Sudanese people held their uprising in April, they had the objective of solving many problems. This uprising was a truthful expression of the rejection by the Sudanese man on the street of the previous regime's policies in the areas of the economy, the problem of the south, foreign debt and the September 1983 laws. The transitional government, when it was established, promised that it would solve these problems, foremost among them the war going on in the south of the Sudan. However, the transitional government wasted time in fruitless talk and did not offer anything tangible; although

the provisional military council gave it many powers in the executive area, what happened? The prices of supply commodities have continued to rise insanely, the price of a sack of coal now is 16 pounds, in spite of that it is not to be found in the markets, a kilogram of meat is now 7 pounds and the prices of fine bread are still in being in accordance with the prices of the dissolved Socialist Union. When the provisional government declared that it would reduce the prices of bread, it reduced the weight of the bread but not the price. What does this mean? Prices of soft drinks, for example Pepsi Cola, have risen to a pound by decree of the government but, after a strike by the workers in these companies lasting more than 3 months, production continued, leading to the loss of millions of pounds for the government treasury, and after negotiation its price reached 50 piasters.

As to the resolution of the war going on in the south under John Garang's leadership, that has taken longer than had been expected because the procedures for the holding of the reconciliation conference were to have been carried out in June or August and we still are forming the preparatory committee for the reconciliation conference, now that the National Grouping has intervened and taken the initiative of undertaking the formation of this committee, since it has become apparent that the government was unable to speed up the measures of establishing the reconciliation conference. This proves the transitional government's failure in this area. The government bears the responsibility for preparing the requisite political atmosphere for the holding of free democratic elections to form a constituent assembly whose prime national responsibility will be to carry out the draft constitution, and the government has indeed proved its failure in this matter as well. The ministerial committee on elections has set out geographic districts without firm bases and has spoiled the transitional military council by issuing the law on geographic districts without concern for population density. For example, it has given the south 61 districts; in 1968 there were 60 districts there. Stranger than that, the population of Equatoria is 1.4 million and the committee has given them 22 districts, on a par with the Bahr al-Ghazal region, whose population is 2.2 million. It has also given the southern region, whose population is 1.6 million, and the Darfur region, whose population is 3.4 million, 29 districts, while it has given the Kordofan region 39 districts and its population is 3 million as well.

This process and incompetence has led to protests, compelling the transitional military council to intervene and amend the law. If the transitional government is thinking of holding elections successfully and peacefully, it must rise to a level higher than its present one, and the obvious failure as well of the transitional government and the struggle going on between the future minister of finance and the council of ministers affirm the lack of harmony within the transitional government itself.

In a democratic system, the army's responsibility is to guarantee the security and safety of the government from foreign and domestic eventualities and to maintain its constitutional system without partiality toward a specific political organization, considering the army a national institution for all the Sudanese.

A National Government

[Question] If the elections are not held for any reason, what would you consider appropriate regarding the formation of the government?

[Answer] The party considers that a national government should be established before the elections themselves. The establishment of a national government as far as the party goes has been approved and agreed on in principle, whether that is before the elections or after their failure. If the elections take place and none of the parties obtains a satisfactory majority which would enable it to form a government, the party considers it appropriate to establish a national government of all the parties which have established their political weight in the elections. A national charter should be set out whose term would range from 3 to 4 years with the intention of solving all the problems the country is facing now, with each party to rise to the level of the public interest and not narrow party interests and the government to preserve order and oversee sound political activity to deter an armed clash among the political parties or members of the unified nation, as we witnessed all during the past 30 years.

Progressive People's Party Views

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[Interview with Eliaba Surur, head of Progressive People's Party]

[Text] The Progressive People's Party is one of the southern parties which arose after the people's uprising and one of the two southern parties whose base is the Equatoria region, where a majority supports the subdivision of the southern region and demands that the Equatoria region be preserved. In addition to that, the party takes a specific position regarding the war in the south, especially with respect to a cease fire on the part of the armed forces. The party leader Eliaba Surur says:

"We have noticed that since the first days of the uprising, many political decisions have been taken without the participation of all the political forces which carried out the uprising, and that the political forces in the region have warned and advised the central authorities that as it takes decisions it should take the roots of the causes of our national problems into account and direct its attention to the people's democratic achievements. However, all the warnings have gone up in thin air. This has led to the articulation by the central authorities of the drawing up of unsuccessful solutions to national problems through decrees and measures taken in isolation, which will lead this country to a state of chaos."

[Question] What specifically are the party's criticisms of the transitional authorities?

[Answer] In the context of the date we referred to, the People's Progressive Party draws the people's attention to a number of issues, one of the most important of which is the constitution of the transitional period. This constitution, in its final form, was hedged about with intense secrecy, although it is a strange situation that all the forces of the people should be isolated from the beginning from such an important activity. The meetings in

regard to the constitution were restricted to the capital. Our observations have been as follows:

Since not all citizens and their organizations in the regions have been given an opportunity since the beginning to express their view in this regard, we are regretful over the limited proceedings which have been devoted to this important document.

Because of our failure to participate in the preparation of this constitution, we will not accept any change in the current administrative status of the Equatoria region during the transitional period; since the expression has clearly been made through the people's political forces embodied in the majority of the citizens of the region, and that has only endorsed the system existing in Equatoria, it is possible to preserve tranquility and prepare a climate which will lead to a better system of government in the Sudan.

[Question] How did you conceive of the constitution for the transitional period?

[Answer] We cannot accept any provisions in this constitution giving any security agency an arbitrating role or absolute powers which could threaten danger for the citizens' basic human rights.

We demand the immediate abrogation of the September 1983 laws as a demand of the masses. With the adoption of this step, we consider that a proper atmosphere will have been created to prepare for a national dialogue.

[Question] What is your party's position on current efforts to hold a conference in which a search will be made for a solution to the problem of the south?

[Answer] The Progressive People's Party would welcome such a conference if the following conditions were met:

That a national charter be issued including the creation of a total, radical solution to national problems with deep roots in the Sudan's political and social history.

The conference must recognize and adopt as a basis for cooperation the fact that the roots of what it has become customary to label the problem of the south lie in ongoing tyranny and lack of equality, in unity and political hegemony by means of the north and the lack of seriousness of successive national governments to solve these problems, though they were given the appropriate opportunities in 1947, 1958, 1965 and 1972.

This conference, in its capacity as a national forum, must consider the problems of the other neglected areas in the country alongside the problems of the south of the country and search for a solution to them. Guided by this approach, it will be possible to set out the details of the best system for governing the Sudan.

To guarantee the effective participation of the representatives of the two regions of Equatoria, it is necessary to recognize that the decentralization the masses of the south have demanded, especially in Equatoria, is the prevailing system, and that stress should be laid on the preservation of the region of Equatoria.

[Question] The transitional government has taken positive steps to prepare for the dialogue, including a cease fire on the part of the armed forces. How do you view this activity?

[Answer] The Progressive People's Party has welcomed the positive steps the transitional government and the provisional military council declared, among them the declaration of general amnesty, since that is an instrument to enable all Sudanese to participate in the peace process, including those of them who have taken up arms. However, our party does not support the unilateral cease fire policy which the transitional military council has declared. Indeed, we advocate having a general cease fire which all parties will commit themselves to, since the government is responsible for protecting lives and peace-loving citizens. In this case, if those people who have taken up arms insist on escalating the war, protection of the citizens cannot be realized through the policy of a unilateral cease fire.

[Question] What then is the party's role?

[Answer] The party has urged everyone who has taken up arms in the Anya Nya Two group and the People's Movement and Army to Liberate the Sudan to respond to the appeal for dialogue and to welcome the proposed conference as a peaceful means for solving our national problems. While we recognize that armed struggle can ultimately lead to a negotiated settlement to the conflict, that does not mean that it is the best approach; as long as there is an opportunity for dialogue, a limit must be put to human suffering.

[Question] Does the party have specific recommendations?

[Answer] We believe that one of the prime tasks of the proposed conference is to support the process of the transfer of powers, that the 1956 constitution amended in 1964 should be adopted as a basis for establishing a federal system in the Sudan, and the eight regions in the country should be turned into small federal states, to form a Sudanese federal union whose capital will be Khartoum.

[Question] What is the party's position on the coming elections?

[Answer] We have welcomed the elections and we demand that the laws on them be neutral, that they be on the basis of one vote for each man, and that the geographic districts be distributed with care among the nine regions (including Khartoum). The elections must be truly national, and not pro forma.

Moslem Brothers Discuss Elections

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[Interview with Dr Yusuf Nur al-Da'im]

[Text] The Moslem Brothers' movement entered the previous parliamentary elections in the Sudan under the name of the Charter Front and managed to win some geographic districts. The movement remained homogeneous until the May regime came to power and some political forces entered what was known as the national reconciliation. That led to the rift in the Moslem Brothers' movement following ideological disputes within its ranks. It split into two currents, one under the leadership of Dr Hasan al-Turabi, the other led by Mr Sadiq 'Abdallah 'Abd-al-Majid. The dispute continued until after the end of the May regime. The latter wing remained independent and the learned Dr Yusuf Nur al-Da'im, lecturer at Khartoum University, assumed its leadership. AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT met him in a conversation soon before the holding of general elections in the Sudan. Let us proceed with the minutes of the conversation:

[Question] Haven't you talked to us about your organization's experience in entering parliamentary elections over a period of time?

[Answer] We embarked on the previous parliamentary elections in the name of the Islamic Charter Front, and Mr Sadiq 'Abdallah 'Abd-al-Majid managed to win a geographic district in Khartoum. Competing with him in these districts was the senior figure of the National Unionist Party, the late Yahya al-Fadli, who was known as the dynamo of the party. This victory was an indication that a modern force had started to find its way with stability and confidence.

The unified Islamic movement continued until new views appeared, advocated by Dr Hasan al-Turabi. These did not meet with acceptance among us (the Moslem Brothers), in addition to the improper political positions regarding the 1969 coup, and Dr Hasan al-Turabi and the people with him since 1977 constantly stood alongside the defunct regime and supported it. Because of these improper ideas and political positions which had newly arisen, we had to leave and distinguish ourselves.

[Question] What about the elections which are expected to be held soon?

[Answer] We put great reliance on the coming elections, since they will be the country's salvation from the many problems surrounding it. Therefore we have come up with the opinion, along with others, that they should be on schedule and we have retreated from some of our declared views, such as our view on the issue of allocating districts to the modern forces.

Our view has been that each voter should have a single vote. When the military council and council of ministers met to allocate districts to the graduates, we agreed to that, out of concern that the elections be held on schedule. At that point some people raised the point that elections could not be held in light of the conditions prevailing in the south. We said that they could be held in the stable areas of the country, and perhaps the situation would become stabilized in the south. I do not consider that I am violating the truth if I say that the issue of the elections is an important one, because a transitional situation, by its nature, is unstable.

Political Soirees Are a Means for Education

[Question] Will the Moslem Brothers' organization venture on the coming elections?

[Answer] In the executive bureau, we have decided to venture on the coming elections on various levels in the capital, the regions and the graduates' districts.

We started at an early point to prepare to enter these elections and made a tour of some of the various cities of the Sudan, where we held political soirees which were successful in terms of numbers and mass response.

Our organization adopts political soirees of this sort as a means for educating and enlightening the people, by promoting the proper Islamic thinking we advocate.

The Transitional Government Is Deficient

[Question] May we ask you as an organization which has participated in choosing the members of the transitional government about your evaluation of the transitional period which followed the people's uprising in the Sudan?

[Answer] As you mentioned in your question, we actually did take part in choosing the members of the transitional government. This was a national duty which had to be performed after we had helped bring down the defunct regime. Following the uprising, the provisional military council invited the armed forces, political parties and union boards to form a transitional government and we happened to respond to this appeal, nominate some names and reject some. There is no doubt that the formation of the government in the form we have described does not make it a strong government founded on a legitimate popular base. The government itself may realize that it is in a temporary transitional state which does not enable it to solve the radical problems the country is facing and it is therefore responding to much pressure from various directions.

The general commander of the Moslem Brothers' organization continued his discussion by saying:

"One of the issues the transitional government has grievously failed to deal with in an objective manner is the problem of John Garang, whom the government is trying to talk with and deal with, while he refuses to do anything but take up arms against it. This sort of policy is neglectful of the country's security and safety.

"We also consider that the transitional government has been deficient and has not taken decisive, deterrent measures against the groups which possess weapons. I was saddened and terrified the day I witnessed one politician with a private guard bristling with weapons. Where is the government and where is the respect for it?"

The Problem of the South

[Question] We are all in agreement that the problem of the south is a national one which requires that the efforts of all parties and political forces in the Sudan be combined to participate effectively in remedying it and solving it radically. How does the Moslem Brothers' organization view the problem of the south?

[Answer] I totally agree with you that the problem of the south is a national one. It is an endemic historic problem, and the solution to it can take place only through mutual consent and consultation. The people of the south themselves must specify what they want and participate honestly and sincerely in the solution to this problem in sound democratic ways. We must distinguish here between a political issue and a security issue raised by John Garang and his followers who bear arms and whom our government receives with branches of olives and figs. The government must rise up to its responsibilities and show clearly and plainly that there is no neglect of the citizens' security and deference to people who are killing innocent people, terrifying the devout, plundering their money and burning their villages.

It is well known that the south is suffering from the tribulations of ignorance and backwardness, as other regions are; we consider that the solution can take place only through combined efforts by all Sudanese so that they will be able to rise up on their own feet without depending on foreign bodies to feed and clothe them. This in many of its aspects concerns the country's future situation. If an upright government exists which can unleash the people's powers and give them the incentive to work and produce, we can look forward to having many problems solved. Otherwise, they will constitute a catastrophe.

The Economic Problem

[Question] The economic problem constitutes one of the areas of concern of the Sudanese man on the street. How does your organization view this serious problem?

[Answer] The Sudan, with its natural resources, is rich, and it amazes one that, in a country in which there is extensive fertile land, a flowing, running Nile and young people with incentives and ambition, we should be so indigent and poor that wheat is imported. We consider that the solution to the economic problem in the Sudan must have a sound intellectual orientation embodied in the faith of the nation, the creation of a good model and upright leadership. My confidence in the Sudanese people is great and without limits. If there is persuasive political leadership, it will be able to produce miracles.

The Future Government

[Question] The coming parliamentary elections are approaching, the orientations of the political parties differ and their intellectual visions are alienated from one another. How do you view the future of government in the Sudan?

[Answer] We previously wrote a statement titled an appeal to the parties and bodies and handed it over to some political leaders in the country. Then we published it in the papers. In it we called for two basic points:

First, it is necessary to agree on a comprehensive intellectual framework. We are thereby referring to the philosophy of government and what view will offer guidance. We of course consider that the intellectual course which

must be adopted is Islam, as the prophet proselytized it and the nation proceeded with it in its brilliant, pure era.

Second, people must reach agreement over the principle of political freedom and the rejection of all tyrannical states, no matter how they may be wrapped in a blanket of reform. We consider that there is a position of principle regarding every situation which arises through violence in order to ride roughshod over people.

[Question] Do you thereby mean removing the army from the seat of government?

[Answer] We consider the army to be a national entity whose first and last mission is to defend the country; we do not consider that the army should enter into politics and affairs of government except in the case of exceptional, very narrow matters.

[Question] You were one of the first political parties to take part in the National Grouping. Then you left it. What are the reasons which prompted you to leave it?

[Answer] This grouping brings together political bodies of numerous characteristics. Its presence at the outset was an inevitable necessity for forming the government, defining the transitional period and declaring the tasks of the transitional period. After this happened, it became apparent that there was no need for it to continue and a conflict arose among the various parties regarding the issues raised within the grouping. It had been expected that the grouping would not be said to hold a view unless that was founded on unanimity on the part of the entities which composed it, and this was not the case.

The grouping for example requested the elimination of the September 1983 laws, including the Islamic laws, in their entirety. This the Moslem Brothers and the Democratic Unionist Party did not agree to. Another example was that some left-wing bodies in the grouping did not want to condemn John Garang for the crimes he was committing against the nation and the citizens -- rather, some of them called him an honorable combatant. When we participated in a march supporting the armed forces and condemning the people violating law and order, the grouping alleged that it was a march of dissension and called on people not to take part in it. That march was a people's referendum from inside the grouping itself, the day the people refused to give in to its appeals and went out on that historic march. Due to these circumstances, attendant facts, reasons and motives we left the National Grouping; thank God we were successful in entering it and in leaving it. Perhaps what indicates the validity of our situation was that the day we left it the Democratic Unionist and the National Unionist [Parties] followed us, suspending their membership.

The Election Measures

[Question] If the coming elections are not held for any reason, what would your organization consider appropriate, a national government or an extension of the transitional period?

[Answer] We consider that the optimum situation is for the transitional period to end at its specified time and for the elections to be held on schedule so that they can bring in a government representing the people in a legitimate way. There is no way to establish a national government unless the elections are held. We also consider that the prime responsibility of this transitional government is to hold the elections, and if it fails in this it will have failed in everything.

Islamic Group Challenges Brothers

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[Interview with 'Ali 'Uthman Muhammad Taha]

[Text] In our conversation with the leaders of the political parties in the Sudan, we have been concerned to develop a sense of the extent of their readiness for the coming parliamentary election campaign which is to end the transitional period and bring in a government deriving its legitimacy from the base of the people. Therefore, most of our conversation with them has concerned the elections, since they are an important political turning point which constitutes a turning point in the course of the democratic orientation in the Sudan.

The National Islamic Front has absorbed the attention of circles of political observers because of the perceptible increase in its political activity and the spread of its political action in the various regions, since it has held thousands of founding conferences. In order to obtain further knowledge about this activity and the future orientations of the front, we held the following conversation with Mr 'Ali 'Uthman Muhammad Taha, the deputy chairman of the National Islamic Front's political bureau. Let us proceed with the minutes of the conversation, so that we can become better acquainted with the front's positions regarding the holding of the elections and the ending of the transitional period:

[Question] What are the National Islamic Front's preparations for entering the coming parliamentary elections?

[Answer] The National Islamic Front is a recently-established political organization in terms of formation, since it was established in May 1985 at the general people's conference in Khartoum which was attended by more than 3,000 persons representing all the regions of the Sudan, especially the south of the Sudan, which contributed 140 members to the founding conference. This was the first time the people of the south of the Sudan were given a say regarding the establishment of a national political entity. However, in terms of the idea on which the Islamic Front was founded, which was embodied in the call for the imposition of governance by the principles of Islamic law on grounds that it was a total system of life, previous attempts had been made to bring this idea about, starting with the first stage of independence, where a popular entity named the Islamic Constitution Front was formed for exerting pressure. That included personnel from various bodies and parties which rallied around this idea and made attempts to persuade the two major parties at that time, the National Unionist and Ummah, to embrace the notion of the Islamic constitution. However, the effort was not made, because of the procrastination by the leaders of the two parties

on the subject. The attempt was then pursued once again following the October revolution, where the appeal was represented by an entity known as the Islamic Charter Front, which ventured on the general elections of 1965 for the first time. Even though its share of the parliamentary seats was limited, it managed to draw up the intellectual and political policy for this period and unleash popular pressure on party leaders, prompting them to adopt the notion of an Islamic constitution, since for the first time the draft of the 1967 charter was set out, containing a group of principles of Islamic law under this broad pressure. That was the same period which witnessed the dissolution of the Sudanese Communist Party on grounds that its existence contradicted the orientation whose features had begun to take form in the draft of the constitution at that time, and because of a minor incident set off by a member of the party which provoked the feelings of the groups of Moslems in the Sudan, who went out into the streets in indignation, calling for a prohibition on the activity of the Sudanese Communist Party and its banishment from political life.

The Front's Electoral Program

From its beginning, the National Islamic Front was established as a people's entity founded on two basic pillars. The first is a specific Islamic conception of all areas of life, as embodied in the constitution of the front which the charter conference approved after thorough discussion; this includes the front's conceptions, goals and ways of attaining these goals.

Second, consultation, embodied in the building of the front's bases and agencies through people's conferences and expanded meetings open to everyone who believes in the goals of the front as included in its constitution. They are commanded by what is virtuous, are enjoined to the truth and choose their commanders in consultation bodies and executive leaders without dictation or preconditions and without discrimination in favor of any group or gathering. These conferences and meetings have organized all the areas and regions of the Sudan, since more than 7,000 conferences have been held, with an average attendance ranging from 3,000 to 4,000, in which thousands of leaders have been elected belonging to various political and religious entities in terms of background who have all hastened to the front in response to its comprehensive political and intellectual premises open to the sincere Moslem. Thus, we can calmly and confidently say that the National Islamic Front is the sole political entity in the Sudan which has been able to reach the people in all villages and wilderness areas in general and organize them into a single path in which loyalties which had divided and fragmented people have been dissolved and in which a domestic national unity founded on the basis of Islam, which had not been provided to the Sudan since the era of the Mahdist revolution, has taken concrete form. These extensive meetings developed into firm structures in which the Islamic Front's activities took form through strong organizations of young people, women, students and areas of modern life such as spheres of economics and social, cultural and proselytizing activities, since the front's activity has not been confined to the political stage only -- rather, it has been concerned with the areas of proselytization and guidance, as it has given great attention to the role of the holy Koran, the mosques and houses of culture and Islamic thinking in general. It has also been concerned with teaching women the affairs of

religion and social activity in the Houses of Devout Women, where there are studies of the holy Koran, jurisprudence and manual training in various crafts, kindergartens and care for orphans, widows and poor families. It has also been concerned with young people and has established specialized volunteer societies for them operating independently in terms of administration and execution but proceeding from the premises of the same Islamic conception. It has been concerned with craftsmen and people of small professions in order to support them and advance their economic role in the society. The front has issued a daily paper speaking in its name and expressing its policies and positions, the newspaper AL-RAYAH. Preparation and arrangements are also being made to issue some circulars and specialized magazines.

[Question] What are the front's tendencies with respect to the treatment of certain national issues such as the issue of government, the south and the economic problem?

[Answer] The first thing the National Islamic Front is concerned about in building an upright political system in the Sudan is consultation in its full Islamic sense. This makes the government a compact and contract between the ruler and ruled from which arise duties and rights and rules of oversight are founded on these in the giving of advice and rectification of distortions, guaranteeing transcendence of the flaws which have led to the collapse of all previous regimes in the Sudan, especially those which were democratic, since they did not extend roots to the seat of belief in the hearts of the masses, where advice and obedience to the ruler become worship of God and defense of the government becomes a religious duty where the establishment of the provisions of Islamic law and God's penalties and obligations are thereby fulfilled.

This system which we are calling for involves recourse to God's book and the sayings and doings of his prophet, on whom be God's prayers and peace, in judgment, and we strive for and exercise individual thinking to offer ideological premises for dealing with such basic issues as the economy, the south, government and foreign policy. In detailing these issues, we say that the issue of government must be established on the principle of Islamic consultation we have adopted as a belief, as a context governing the parties' customary activity and legitimacy.

In further execution of the principle of consultation, because of the state of affairs of the Sudan, with vast areas and difficult communications, assigning people's affairs to local regional institutions becomes a political and Islamic necessity since the orbit of responsibility is always the individual himself and the ruler is only a delegate who has been assigned to organize relations the individual cannot organize. Consequently, the front's position on the regional government system in the Sudan is an Islamic one. Some of its leaders deserve credit for taking the initiative of calling for it in 1967, in the committee of 12 negotiations, and therefore the administration of the Sudan on a decentralized basis in which the regional and local organizations will gradually rise and their areas of specialization and relationship to the center will be governed in accordance with a comprehensive political agreement is the framework we advocate for the government of the Sudan. It is a flexible framework which will have the effect of

absorbing contradictions in cultures and social differences, paving the way for these organizations' growth and progress so that they may catch up to the other parts of the country and be fused in a single homogeneous framework. In this framework, we must make an important reference to the situation in the south of the Sudan, where the broad context of decentralization has the scope to accommodate the distinctive characteristics of the south of the Sudan and where the relationship between what the regional authorities in the south and the central authorities in the north can engage in may be sketched out in total flexibility, without weakening the united entity of the Sudan or meaning coercion or a forcible imposition on the south or any policies of a national character. Here a picture of the constitution of the first civilian government by which the prophet of God, on whom be God's prayers and peace, organized the political relations of the first Islamic state, which embraced Moslems and non-Moslems in its bosom, as is known, comes to my mind. With a searching look at this constitution we find that it provides a formula which in its benefits is superior to the federal formula which is now being proposed for organizing the relationship between the north and the south; we in the Islamic Front see no harm in discussing this in the context of the comprehensive settlement of the issue of the south, which there is no way to remedy unless the voice of guns by means of which John Garang is trying to impose a fait accompli and obtain some benefits by force, betrayal of the innocent and plunder of their property is stilled. This is something we totally reject and we call for it to be abandoned so that the voice of reason instead of guns may be uplifted and it will be possible to sit down at the negotiating table without preconditions on the part of any party.

The Transitional Period

[Question] What is your assessment of the transitional period?

[Answer] One can view the transitional period from two aspects. There is the official aspect; for example, regarding the military council and council of ministers, we find that they have in general been successful in carrying out the most important duty of the stage of transition, which in our estimation is the temporary constitution, which has come into application in general in accordance with our conception of this matter and a serious concern to end the period of transition on schedule, since the law on elections has been issued and arrangements are being made in satisfactory form to carry out and hold the elections on schedule. As regards the other issues, such as the issue of the south, the economic issue and so forth, it is not fair to accuse the councils of shortcomings in solving them, since logic cannot imagine that two problems which have accumulated over the years since independence can be solved in a few months. What the effort of the two councils will end up with in this regard, no matter what its size and magnitude might be, will constitute an estimable step on which we will build the new government after the establishment of the constituent assembly.

[Question] If the elections are not held, for any reason, what does the Islamic Front consider appropriate -- the establishment of a national government or extension of the transitional period?

[Answer] We first of all insist on the holding of elections and termination of the transitional period on schedule, and we do not see anything in the current political and security circumstances which might call for the postponement of the elections. Nonetheless, if unforeseen emergency circumstances arise now, we would prefer to deal with them in a timely manner, according to their own causes and concomitant circumstances. We do not want starting now to get into compulsory conditions in advance on dealing with circumstances which might arise and lead to the postponement of the elections and extension of the transitional period.

Southern Movement Discusses Rebellion

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[Interview with Philip 'Abbas Ghabbush]

[Text] In the first press interview Philip 'Abbas Ghabbush has given since his release, after his lack of direct involvement in the incidents of the military rebellion which took place in the Sudan last 26-27 September was proved, he declared that he has no connection with this rebellion, which was just a problem within the armed forces and not a coup.

Ghabbush, in the interview he gave to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Omdurman, stated that before the rebellion he had been in hiding in the Umm Baddah area as one security measure for protecting himself out of fear that he would be subjected to an assassination attempt. Some members of his party, the Sudanese National Party, had been expected to carry out on behalf of another party.

He added that when he returned to his home he heard on the radio and read in the papers that he had been accused of planning for a military coup. He went to the armed forces general command and surrendered himself, although he knew that the penalty for mounting a coup is death.

He said that after his lack of connection to the September incidents had been proved, it was decided to release him.

Concerning his relationship with John Garang, the commander of the rebels in the south, he said that no direct relationship with him existed but that the relationship was one of expression of a grievance, and he went on to say, "Our ideas and Garang's are the same. He tells his story with iron and fire, and we tell the same story by holding political symposia."

He stressed that the Solidarity of the Forces of the Rural Areas would be able to convince Garang to agree to a dialogue to solve the problem of the south.

He claimed it was necessary to strip the Sudanese parties of weapons and eliminate their trained militia so that the elections would be democratic and proper and so that the Sudan would not be turned into another Lebanon.

After his lack of direct involvement in the military rebellion the Sudan witnessed last 26-27 September was proved, Philip 'Abbas Ghabbush was released this month. He had been imprisoned with other military and civilian

personnel on the charge of taking part in this rebellion. The groups loyal to him in the Sudanese Nationalist Party had held a number of demonstrations demanding the release of Ghabbush, the leader of the party.

In his home in a section of the city of Omdurman, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT met with Ghabbush in order to hold with him the first interview he has given to an Arabic newspaper on his relationship with the events of the rebellion and Col John Garang and his position on the current developments in the Sudan and preparation for the coming elections.

The first question concerned the story behind the events of last September and the charge of trying to mount a military coup that was directed at him.

[Answer] What happened was not a coup but a problem within the armed forces, and the failure to think deeply about this problem caused the people making the accusation to charge that we had planned for the September operation. This charge was trumped up, since how can a civilian plan for a military coup? I direct this question to all intelligent people in the Sudan. I surrendered to the government knowing that the punishment for a coup is death.

Why was I released if there was anything that would prove that I planned for a military coup? As regards my procrastination in surrendering myself, that can be attributed to the party's tactics. There is a party which bought some members of our party and asked them to assassinate me, and I took insurance measures for myself in the Umm Baddah region a few days before the movement that took place within the armed forces. When I got back home I heard the radio, read the papers, went to the general armed forces command and surrendered myself. After that, my connection with this incident was not proved and I was released.

[Question] Your party is accused of being racist and dealing only with regional forces. What is your response to that?

[Answer] We are not racists, because we do not believe that our blood and color are superior. People must rise to the level of knowledge and responsibility instead of slandering people with these charges. Many parties say that we are racists. We are proud that we are Africans, as the other Sudanese are proud that they are Arabs; why shouldn't we attach the word "racism" to them? No one can take our pride at our Africanness away from us, and if our pride at our Africanness is racist, so be it. We call for Sudanese nationalism to be the most comprehensive vessel, the one which includes everyone. We are not regionalists because we are present everywhere and our relations with the forces of the rural areas arise from our feeling that the rural areas are the basis and the Sudanese National Party and the Solidarity of the Forces of the Rural Areas are open to all Sudanese.

The Relationship with Garang

[Question] You continue to support John Garang, following his assault on one of your areas, al-Qurdud. What is the relationship that exists between you and Garang? What do you consider appropriate for solving the problem of the south?

[Answer] No direct relationship exists with our son Garang; rather, the relationship is one of a joint submission of a grievance, "the grievance of the people who have been ignored" by the successive governments, and our ideas and those of our son Garang are the same. He is relating the story of our grievance through iron and fire, and we are relating the same story from within, through political symposia and soirees.

As to the events of al-Qurdud village, John Garang did not commit them. Rather, the assault was carried out by the remnants of 'Abdallah Chol's forces. After Garang's forces executed Abdallah Chol, Chol's forces became extremely shiftless and our people in these areas know them well. That the government's declaration was made that Garang did that can be explained by Chol having then become its ally, and I am certain that the government does not know who raided the al-Qardud area. Therefore, accusing Garang is one of the reasons why the rift is growing and the issue of the government's dialogue with Garang is being ruled out more and more.

The south's problem is similar to ours, although our problem in Jabal al-Nubah is more out of hand; we believe that the south of the Sudan, relative to the Nuba Mountains, is very developed and we believe that the Nuba Mountains' problems are less severe because of the relative interconnection between the people of the north and the Nuba Mountains, that is, there is a relative openness. As for the south, that is in total isolation and even the few cases of interconnection are tenuous.

All we ask for, we and the people of the south, is equality in the distribution of production and services. The south is a great investment area from all standpoints but anxiety over the problems that might occur in the south has led to its neglect. Therefore the governments have not been oriented toward establishing factories and projects. I believe that Numayri's government is the only one which made progress in this stagnant situation in a relative sense. The real problem here is the extreme backwardness and constant neglect, and we ask the coming governments to set out accurate scientific studies to develop all areas of the Sudan.

We in the Sudanese National Party believe that our son John Garang has not been responsive to dialogue in view of his doubts about the current government and his belief that it is a leftover from the previous regime. Another reason is that none of the people who have gone to Addis Ababa to persuade John Garang have been the right ones. I believe that the Solidarity of the Forces of the Rural Areas can convince Garang to agree to the dialogue to solve this problem which has been bleeding the people of the Sudan.

The Elections and the Reconciliation Conference

[Question] Do you believe that the course of events will lead to the holding of elections on schedule?

[Answer] I doubt that the elections will be held on schedule because the partial elections in the past led to the further development of problems in the south in the days of the first Anya Nya. I have been in parliament since 1946 and I believe that the traditional nationalist parties insist on

holding elections in order to isolate the views of the south, ratify the permanent constitution and put the nation on the brink of an abyss. We believe that in order that proper democratic elections may be held the constitutional conference or conference of national reconciliation must be held to solve the problem of the south and improve the economic situation.

Holding elections while these two problems continue will lead to unreal representation of the Sudanese people. On the Sudan's behalf, we demand cancellation of the elections because they have now become the main preoccupation of all parties, which have pretended not to notice that there are hundreds of citizens belonging to the same people who are dying in the south of the country.

If the elections are not postponed, we will be compelled to enter them in full force to thwart the reactionary forces and support the true democratic forces which will participate in solving the two major problems the Sudan is facing.

It is not reasonable that proper elections should be held, when we all know that there are a number of parties which have weapons and store them up, and have militias trained to use them -- that is, if they fail through the democratic process, and we doubt that they will win, the second option, as far as they go, is weapons. How then can the elections be democratic and proper, with our demand and the demand of many true democratic parties that these parties be stripped of their weapons, when our whole fear is that the Sudan will be turned into another Lebanon?

[Question] What is your opinion about the law on elections? What will be the effect of partial elections on the future of government in the Sudan?

[Answer] Our conception concerning the representation of the modern forces was not initially an integrated one, though in the recent period we have asked that the representation of the modern forces be increased, because of our belief that the issue of the representation of the modern forces was a political game on the part of the traditional parties. Now, however, our support for increased representation of modern forces arises from our conviction that these forces enjoy a high level which is capable of understanding the problems of the oppressed regions.

As to the effect of the holding of partial elections on the future of the government in the Sudan, it will bring the Sudan back to 1968 with all the problems of that period. In other words, these partial elections will facilitate the road toward another May and the charter for the defense of democracy is a card which can be torn up as the constitutions were torn up when the coups took place. Therefore we have demanded and will continue to demand the postponement of partial elections, and the parties must become alert from past experience.

[Question] How do you explain the connection some parties make between storing up arms and adhering to the democratic platform?

[Answer] Storing up arms is the major obstacle to the establishment of a democratic situation, because arms are the sole executioner of democracy,

and we believe that if the parties do not liquidate their militias and hand over the arms they have, or the government does not strip them of these weapons and after that carry out a broad inspection process to put people at rest, there will be no democracy; rather, it will die in its cradle. The orientation toward weapons means an absence of belief in democracy.

A National Government

[Question] What do you consider proper, if the elections are not held on schedule?

[Answer] We are demanding that elections not be held at all, for the reasons I mentioned above. We recommend the dissolution of the transitional government and the military council and the establishment of a national government which will take the various areas of the Sudan into consideration in its composition and will have a sovereignty council. We recommend that our son John Garang be one of its members and, in order that we may find a formula for forming this government, we recommend that the National Grouping be in charge of that, since it was the leader of the April uprising and the comprehensive vessel for all nationalistic forces. The grouping lost this opportunity directly after the uprising took place. It ought to have taken charge of things from the first moment, before it turned into a marginal form of authority. We recommend that if there are forces which have left the grouping or have not entered it attempts be made to persuade them to change their view, so that we will thereby have brought all the political forces in the Sudan together within a single vessel which can form a national government enabling it to solve all the problems facing the country. We recommend the tenure of a year for such a government.

[Question] What is your conception of the issue of ensuring the course of democracy after the end of the transitional period?

[Answer] We believe that the establishment of a national government which will devote attention to getting all political and tribal orientations to participate will be in effect cold water on the fire which has raged in everyone's hearts. Therefore we appeal for nationalism and promise the Sudanese people that if we get a majority we will also form a national government and nationalism will be the barrier obstructing all attempts at coups and will in effect be the anathema of thinking directed toward coups.

[Question] Will the Sudanese National Party enter the elections alone or will it try to enter into party alliances?

[Answer] We entered into an alliance with a number of parties and political forces and formed the organization of Solidarity of the Forces of the Rural Areas. This organization is not a tentative one -- rather, it is a strategic joining of forces by which we will enter the election campaign, and we will try to attract all the moderate parties, democratic forces and organizations which are attentive to the problem of the south. We will be lying in wait for such reactionary forces as the May Front under al-Turabi's leadership and we will coordinate with all the organizations to get these sorts of fronts out of the coming parliament and to create democratic forces which understand the problems of the backward, oppressed and neglected regions.

Analyst Examines Election Trends

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[Article by al-Sirr Sayyid Ahmad]

[Text] The wheel of elections in the Sudan is expected to begin to turn when voter registration starts tomorrow, Saturday. With the approach of the election campaign, the strength of the tendencies which aim at postponing them has been diminishing. Numerous questions have been raised on the possibility that the elections will be held, not just because of the security situation in the south but also because of what has appeared to be a lack of desire on the part of numerous political tendencies concerning the holding of these elections.

The Grouping of the Forces of the Sudanese Rural Areas, which includes 12 regional federations, recently called for the postponement of elections until the constitutional conference is held and the political and development situation in the regions is organized. These forces of the rural areas, like the leaders of the parties, need to establish their presence among their masses, but their grouping indicates the increasing importance of the rural areas on the political stage. It is an importance which has become more conspicuous since the application of regional government in the Sudan and the additional element the new law on elections has provided by setting out graduates' districts on a geographic basis. This is a state of affairs which will generally impose itself through the nomination of people from regions in their own districts, rather than having candidates sent out from their capitals as had been prevalent in the past.

There was a possibility, and it still exists, that some political forces, especially those forces which have not prepared themselves, because of their internal rifts or financial and organizational weakness, or even because of their fear of the active movement of the Moslem Brothers, combined under the banner of the National Islamic Front, will support the tendency to postpone the elections.

Ruling out a Postponement

However, whatever their reasons and motives have been, the postponement of the elections seems an activity that is to be ruled out. On the political side, it has become apparent in a manner which leaves no room for doubt that the legacy bequeathed by the former era calls for a stable government founded on specific constitutional legitimacy because that will deal with problems that require mass support and unified vision. Moreover, the transitional period can be extended only by agreement of all the parties, that is, the provisional military council, the council of ministers, the National Grouping and all parties. Their agreement over the extension of the period seems an impossibility, especially as regards each party's political calculation and vision of its expected gains. As regards the south, the worst that could happen is the holding of partial elections. The country has previous experience in this regard with which to guide itself.

From the standpoint of election preparedness, the Moslem Brothers come in the forefront because they were the first ones to begin actual movement, relying on the massive economic power and excellent organizational strength they had accumulated since the time of their reconciliation with Numayri. They are followed by the Ummah Party led by al-Sadiq al-Mahdi. The activity of the brothers, who have covered almost the whole Sudan, has provided the self-confidence to prompt them to indicate that they do not intend to engage in coordination with any body whatever regarding the elections and that they consequently will enter them by themselves.

However, there are a number of points which must be taken into consideration when talking about the brothers' power. They have succeeded in attracting a number of sheikhs of Sufic orders to the ranks of the Islamic Front, which they lead, and these people and their followers have taken part in the front's conferences on grounds that they constitute activity favorable to the call to Islam. However, that does not of necessity mean these people are automatically committed to voting for the brothers. These sheikhs have their own previous political commitments, indeed their own vision and practice, which will prompt them, out of concern for their own interests, not to put all their eggs in one basket.

The Brothers and Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi

Moreover, the brothers were the first people to go down into the streets to mobilize it. In their election campaign they concentrated on attacking al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, who was the most vociferous in attacking them because of their participation with al-Numayri in his Islamic experiment. The attack on the September laws by which al-Numayri applied his Islamic experiment, which the brothers adopted, by a political leader like al-Sadiq who has his mass weight and Islamic status locally and internationally, is one that has weight which is not to be taken any more lightly than if it came from the Communist Party, for example.

Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi made his election rounds after the brothers had finished. He did not hide his goals of eliminating the effects of what the brothers had imparted from anyone. One could say that the brothers' strength must have been affected after al-Sadiq's rounds. In addition to that, there are some other factors, such as the good fall which the country has witnessed and the abundant crop derived from it: all this will have a negative effect on the positions the brothers had acquired because of their activity in the area of aid-giving.

Finally, the media strength of the brothers, since they have three newspapers, might make their voice louder, but this loud voice is not of necessity reflected in parliamentary seats. Nonetheless, there is something to indicate that the brothers' presence in the elections will constitute a surprise relative to their status as a small ideological organization. This is a surprise considering that they began political activity after the uprising from the weakest position, which was their alliance with al-Numayri, and memories are still alive. In addition to that, the weakness of the other political forces in financial and organizational terms will give the brothers additional strength.

Except for the partisans of the al-Muhammadiyah Sunnites, the Ba'th and to some extent the southern parties, all the political forces have ruled out the idea of engaging in coordination in the elections so far. The partisans of the Sunnites have declared that they will support people whom they consider will serve the cause of Islam and the Ba'thists will concentrate on bringing down the May symbols. The people of the south, in spite of their differences, are in agreement over the appeal for a secular constitution and they will strive for coordination with the parties that support them in their orientation toward that.

No Coordination

While the brothers have declared their lack of response to coordination, out of confidence in their abilities, the communists are not enthusiastic about the formation of a front of forces of the left. They still believe that it is possible to develop the charter of the uprising, which contains numerous forces greater than the narrow ideological breakdown. Even the talk that is constantly being made about coordination between the Ummah and Democratic Unionist Parties has not yet reached the stage of coordination in the elections, but is concentrated around the effort to unify the parties' positions concerning the National Grouping, the September laws and the anticipated constitutional conference.

This lack of coordination, whose consequence might be the failure of a clear majority to emerge in the coming constituent assembly, will be a prelude to the definition of the real magnitude of the political forces. One negative aspect of the transitional period is that in the context of current revolutionary legitimacy and a pluralistic political system everyone has equal votes, which does not reflect the real political weight of each group and paralyzes the possibilities for general action.

The delapidated situation the uprising inherited could become an electoral advantage. In the context of the delapidated economic situation, no candidate can promise his voters that he will offer services and improve conditions. The years of May devastation based on the presidential republic have now driven these ideas from acceptance by the people. The tendency before May was toward the establishment of a presidential republic, but the al-Numayri experiment has shown the dictatorial pitfalls of such a system. Therefore the discussion will not make a distinction between a parliamentary or presidential system. The Sudan has tried both, and the situation requires more thought processes and deeper application of the experiment in order to provide a convincing alternative. The May experiment, which enjoyed political and media dominance, has shown the failure of this orientation. The first people to rise up against May were its own generation, which had not previously gone through an experience with parties.

How Can We Deal with the Problems?

There remains a basic question which every voter must ask and every candidate must attempt to answer. That is a question which always begins with "how" -- that is, how can one deal with the wreckage of the problems the Sudan is suffering from, in the form of the south, the economy, the constitutional situation and foreign relations?

There are many indications that the electoral base could play an effective role even in guiding the people who lead it, contrary to the negative situation which prevailed in the past. One of these indications is the tendency toward unification in the Democratic Unionist Party and the party leadership's declaration that 90 percent of the September laws have no connection with Islam. The party leadership at the beginning had adopted a position more in line with the preservation of these laws. Indeed, this position on its part was one of the causes of its problems with the National Grouping.

It might be very early to make an assessment of what the uprising in the Sudan has done so far, but, in spite of the numerous negative features, there are bright signs which one must pause to consider. When the chairman of the board of the Institute of Technological Faculties files a suit against the prime minister, who suspended him from his job, and wins it, and when the court of the Falasha summons the head of state to the witness stand and he appears and gives his testimony, just like others, that constitutes a development in the Sudan's course which inspires not just pride but on top of that a pause for reflection on how to preserve this achievement. In a country which has experienced dawn visitors, preventive imprisonment and the devastation of human dignity, the process of responsible examination before casting a vote becomes a national task, not just an election process.

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